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DEPT FOR NEA/ARPI, NEA/PPD, NEA/P, AND INR/R/MR

LONDON FOR TSOU
PARIS FOR ZEYA

USCENTCOM FOR PLUSH

FOREIGN PRESS CENTER FOR SILAS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS:

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: SUPPORTING PALESTINE; DEMOCRACY AND
HAMAS; THE AMERICAN EMPIRE; BIN LADEN AND DAHAB

"Eternal" Support for the Palestinian Cause

11. Privately owned Arabic daily "Al-Watan" (circulation 42,000) published an editorial April 21 under the headline "The Sultanate and the Commitment to Supporting the Palestinian Issue":

"The Sultanate tirelessly dedicates itself to reaffirming its support for Arab and Islamic issues, chief among them the Palestinian issue... The remarks of Palestinian information minister Jamal Al Khadari were to the point when, at the end of his visit to the Sultanate yesterday, he confirmed his appreciation for the position of Sultan Qaboos. Most Omanis, government and people, support an eternal commitment for the fraternal Palestinian people... In order to please extremist Israeli elements, the Europeans and Americans have backtracked on their involvement with Palestinian humanitarian concerns. As a result, there is a greater need than ever before to support all Palestinian movements, whether from the Palestinian Authority or the democratically elected government."

"Refusing Democracy in Palestine"

12. In the government-owned daily "Oman" (circulation 38,000) columnist Abdullah al-Ulian wrote an editorial on April 24 discussing "American Attitudes toward the Palestinian Issue and the Example of Hamas's Victory":

"For decades, American policy was characterized by political, military, economic, and strategic support for Israel at all levels. However, after the second Gulf War and the entry of Arab countries in the 1990 international coalition to eject Iraq from Kuwait, America offered a different view. It was understood that the U.S. had taken a step toward a more neutral stance in the Middle East...but unfortunately America did not change any of its traditional policies or its blind support for Israel... This has been the American position for decades, and it is unable to establish a stable peace... The U.S. should change its present position and, at the very least, stand behind what it announces to the world. The policy of starving the Palestinians because they elected Hamas is incomprehensible and illogical. It contradicts what the U.S. says about anchoring democracy in the Arab world... Refusing democracy in Palestine, and the attempt to use economic and political pressure to change attitudes, is dangerous for the issue of peace and stability... This will lead to instability and tension in the region."

The American Empire: Decline and Fall?

13. "Oman" published an editorial on April 22 averring that "The American Empire is in Decay."

"The British Empire, on which the sun never set, deteriorated because of its military adventures, and the strain of financial expenditures to its colonies in the East led to its collapse... U.S. military adventures have increased since the 1950s, most prominently in Southeast Asia...which were crowned with military, political, and psychological defeats that still manifest themselves inside America... In the case of a struggle between America and any other country, the closest example being Iraq, American invasion spurs tragic events... Iraq has turned into a bloody swamp, and Iraqi politicians are unable to push the political process forward... Continuing pre-emptive wars such as those supported by the military leadership and men in the Defense Department -- especially Rumsfeld -- will hasten this decay and lead America into the same mistakes that the British and French empires made."

Online: Dahab Bombings and Bin Laden's Most Recent Message

14. Internet message board "al-Sablah" is Oman's highest-profile online forum for political and social discourse, touching on issues and personalities rarely addressed in the conventional media. An April 26 thread has to date attracted over a thousand hits in the course of discussing Osama bin Laden's most recent message and the bombings in Dahab, Egypt. One poster criticized President Bush for "stealing and killing." In response, another participant asked, "What is the relationship of the innocent victims in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and Afghanistan with Bush? Must innocents pay the price for Bush's crimes?" One member took a conspiratorial line on the Dahab bombings: "Isn't it strange that the number of Egyptians killed was 20, while only three foreigners died? Why were Egyptians targeted when foreigners could have been as well? I think that the real goal behind these attacks is to continue to provide a pretext for the war against what is called terrorism." Another worried about similar attacks close to home: "It's not impossible that bin Laden would wage attacks in Muscat, for example at a shisha cafe or in one of the movie theaters, because governments of the Gulf countries are corrupt in his view."

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